

19 September, 2001

Lake H. Barrett, Acting Director
Office of Civilian Radioactive Waste Management
Department of Energy
Washington, DC 20585

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Dear Mr. Barrett: Re your letter of 28 August:

In light of the 11 September tragedy in New York, now, more than ever, the proposed plan for a nuclear repository at Yucca Mountain should be abandoned. This site would require the transport of nuclear waste nearly all across the country. The possibility of terrorist attacks upon nuclear plants and nuclear weapons storage facilities is very real and trains or trucks carrying nuclear waste are perfect targets.

It is high time that nuclear plants across the US shut down. It is a national disgrace that these potential time bombs continue and in so doing discourage the search for viable energy alternatives, i.e.: solar, wind, etc. Meanwhile, those who create the waste should have to store it however they can.

In terms of safe storage, scientists generally agree there is no such thing. Moving the waste by train or truck imperils every citizen in every town in its wake. Recent train accidents have brought to light the fact that rails in many parts of the country are in poor condition. The current economic distress of just one railroad, CSX, is a case in point. Emergency and security personnel are in no way capable of coping with either accidents or terrorist attacks. We saw proof of the latter on 11 September.

Nuclear energy is no safer now than it used to be and no one has discovered a safe way to store the waste. There are 40,000 metric tons of depleted uranium fuel immersed in storage pools or encased in aboveground casks in 34 states, according to Newsweek (30 July, 2001). Spencer Abraham, Energy Secretary, has no right to put the lives of US citizens and generations of those unborn, at risk.

According to Newsweek, the Western New York Nuclear Service Center shut down in 1972, leaving hazardous waste stored in a warehouse and under tarpaulins in surrounding fields. 125 reactor fuel assemblies were stored in a slowly deteriorating indoor pool lined with brown scum and filled with lethally radioactive waste.

If we are to learn anything from the recent attack on the World Trade Center buildings, it is that we have disregarded threats to our national security. In the quest for easy answers and easy money, US utility companies have ignored their responsibility to their customers. It is time to close all nuclear plants and begin a serious search for a safe way to store the waste already created.

Sincerely,



Jean Caldwell
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